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ABSTRACT

This resource booklet is to assist agencies and schools in creating service-learning opportunities for youth to enhance and build upon the classroom education. The document includes sections on: (1) "Youth Serving Communities"; (2) "What is Service Learning?"; (3) "A Win-Win Opportunity"; (4) "Agency Concerns about Service Learning"; (5) "What Makes Service Learning Work"; (6) "What You Can Do: First Steps"; (7) "Resources for Service Learning"; (8) "Notes"; and (9) "Acknowledgments." (EH)

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Everyone Wins When Youth Serve

Building Agency/School Partnerships for Service Learning

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A "Communities as Places of Learning" Resource from The Points of Light Foundation

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Everyone Wins When Youth Serve

Building Agency/School Partnerships for Service Learning

A "Communities as Places of Learning"
Resource from The Points of Light Foundation

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FOUNDATION

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The Points of Light Foundation's Communities as Places of Learning Initiative

This resource has been created as part of The Points of Light Foundation's Communities as Places of Learning Initiative. Through this Initiative, the Foundation seeks to bridge the gap between classroom and community learning by working with communities to create service-learning opportunities for youth. Research indicates that the benefits of actively involving young people in the community and connecting these experiences with their education relates positively to their social, personal and intellectual development.

In an effort to assist communities to develop these kind of opportunities, the Foundation, with major support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Luke B. Hancock Foundation, is developing models of places of learning in four California communities: San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa. In each community, Volunteer Centers are assisting schools and agencies in developing opportunities where young people can serve and learn. In addition, the Foundation is seeking to demonstrate the potential contribution of youth service to educational improvement efforts in these four California communities.

The Foundation is also working with the National Youth Leadership Council, a national advisory committee of volunteer, youth service, service-learning and nonprofit organizations and the four California sites to develop tools which will assist agencies and schools in creating service-learning opportunities for youth. The development of these materials will help agencies create service opportunities which enhance and build on a young person's classroom education. For more information about the Initiative contact:

The Points of Light Foundation
Youth and Education Outreach Area
1737 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-223-9186 fax 202-223-9256

Everyone Wins When Youth Serve was developed by The Points of Light Foundation in partnership with the National Youth Leadership Council, St. Paul, Minnesota. Author: Eugene Roehlkepartain, Search Institute. Communities as Places of Learning Initiative Manager: Cynthia Scherer, The Points of Light Foundation. Resource and Training Material Project staff: Mark Langseth, National Youth Leadership Council and Rich Cairn, Cairn and Cairn Associates.

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Youth Serving Communities

Salt Lake City had a problem, and no one was doing anything about it: 50,000 barrels of hazardous waste were corroding in a lot near a local school. Alarmed by this threat, a group of citizens organized and started pushing for change. They talked to the health department, the mayor, the media, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state legislature. Though they ran into roadblock after roadblock, the activists persevered.

In the end, their persistence paid off. Not only was the site cleaned up, but the group secured passage of two new environmental laws and funding for planting trees across the state and the nation.

This story would be remarkable for any small grass-roots group. What makes it even more remarkable is that these citizens were all students at Jackson Elementary School who were learning about the environment and clean water as part of their classwork.

Their teacher, Barbara A. Lewis, said of her students: "They sometimes forget assignments. They lose papers. Their bedrooms aren't always clean. . . . They're not rich or unusually clever. But one thing they do have is courage. They don't give up easily. They believe the future depends on them. They're not afraid to attack things that other people say can't be done."[1]

These students in Salt Lake City aren't alone. Young people in communities across the United States are on the front lines addressing some of the most pressing issues and concerns of the day: teen violence, AIDS, homelessness, environmental degradation, illiteracy, teen pregnancy. Their energy, commitment and ideas are enhancing the services of community organizations and their ability to impact these issues.

The impetus for this involvement comes from many places. Families are serving together. Places of worship are encouraging young people to serve their community. And schools are discovering that service by young people not only benefits the community but provides an opportunity for youth to learn.

Increasingly this last approach, called service learning, is placing demands on agencies to provide opportunities where young people can **serve and learn.** While these demands may appear overwhelming, they can actually open doors for innovative new partnerships for community organizations. *Everyone Wins When Youth Serve* explores the phenomenon of service learning from an agency perspective. It discusses the concept of service learning, the benefits of creating service-learning opportunities for youth, common agency concerns, what makes service learning work and first steps agencies can take to develop these kind of opportunities.

Service learning is an important tool for helping young people learn and grow. It is also an important tool for meeting agency and community needs. Service learning provides benefits for everyone involved – it's a win-win opportunity.

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Youth Service Facts & Figures

Research on youth volunteerism points to the potential of service learning in a community:

- The average teenager volunteers almost two hours per week. In 1991, teens gave an estimated total of 2.1 billion hours in both formal and informal volunteering. (Independent Sector)

- Teenagers most frequently volunteer for religious organizations (29 percent), informal volunteering (27 percent), youth development and recreational organizations (26 percent) and education (22 percent). (Independent Sector)

- Young people who volunteer and serve others are less likely to be involved in at-risk behaviors such as alcohol or other drug abuse, vandalism and skipping school. (Search Institute)

- The main reasons teenagers say they volunteer are:
  (1) They believe it's important to help others;
  (2) They have compassion toward others in need;
  (3) They support causes that are important to them.
  (Independent Sector)

- A survey of participants at the 1992 International Conference of Volunteer Administration found that 35 percent of represented organizations had more youth involved now than in previous years. (Association for Volunteer Administration)

- There are at least 2,500 youth community service programs in the United States. In addition, 8,000 public and private high schools have community service programs. (Youth Service America)

- People who volunteer as children are much more likely to volunteer when they become teenagers and adults. (Independent Sector)

What is Service Learning?

The term service learning is not familiar to many in the volunteer community. More common terms are volunteering, community service, youth service, service projects, public service and voluntary action. Unlike these terms, service learning **deliberately** links young people's service in the community with their learning, particularly their learning in school. Through service learning, young people help others in their community while also enhancing their own education. For example:

- Home economics students learn to cook, then take the meals to a homeless shelter. Afterwards they talk about their experiences and what they've learned—including the causes and consequences of homelessness.

- In addition to caring for residents in a nursing home, young people learn about aging or the history of their community.

- While cleaning up and repairing a community park, young people learn about the environment and their responsibilities as citizens.

- English students develop their reading skills and are exposed to quality literature as they create books on tape for people with impaired vision.

Three Elements of Service Learning

Service learning works effectively for youth when these three elements are in place:

1. Careful planning and preparation. Young people, schools and agencies must be part of planning service-learning opportunities and each should be prepared for their role.

2. Meeting real community needs. The service performed by youth must be seen as relevant and timely. The service must be valued by agencies and youth.

3. Reflection. Structured time is provided for students to reflect on their service; or their service is related to their academic work.

A Win-Win Opportunity

Though it certainly takes effort and creativity, service learning offers tremendous potential for everyone involved. People who have formed these partnerships have found that everyone "wins" in a well-designed service-learning effort.

Community Organizations WIN -

Involving children and teenagers in service learning requires a significant commitment. It may require redesigning some elements of a volunteer program. But agencies find that the rewards more than compensate for the demands. Benefits of involving youth or developing a service-learning partnership with schools include:

- Agencies gain volunteers who do real work which addresses their mission.

- Agencies gain volunteers who are already prepared and trained.

- Agencies gain new partners in their efforts to fulfill their mission.

- Young people bring a sense of vitality and excitement to the organization.

- The agency gains positive visibility and exposure in the community and school.

- Service learning can open up new opportunities for funding and other resources.

- By involving young people in an agency's work, service learning helps to nurture the next generation of committed volunteers.

Youth WIN -

Just as anyone who provides service gains from the experience, children and teenagers benefit from the opportunities to serve, particularly when their needs for learning are taken into account in the planning and implementation. Both research and experience point to the following kinds of benefits for young people:

- Service learning can enhance personal development; this includes self-esteem, moral reasoning, social skills, communication skills, problem-solving abilities and concern for others and society.

- Involvement in service learning makes the subject matter in school real and relevant for young people as they try out their knowledge and skills.

- When young people serve others, they see that they are valued and truly can make a difference.

- As young people discover their own abilities to address issues, they are empowered to be active citizens. Communities begin to see them in a different light.

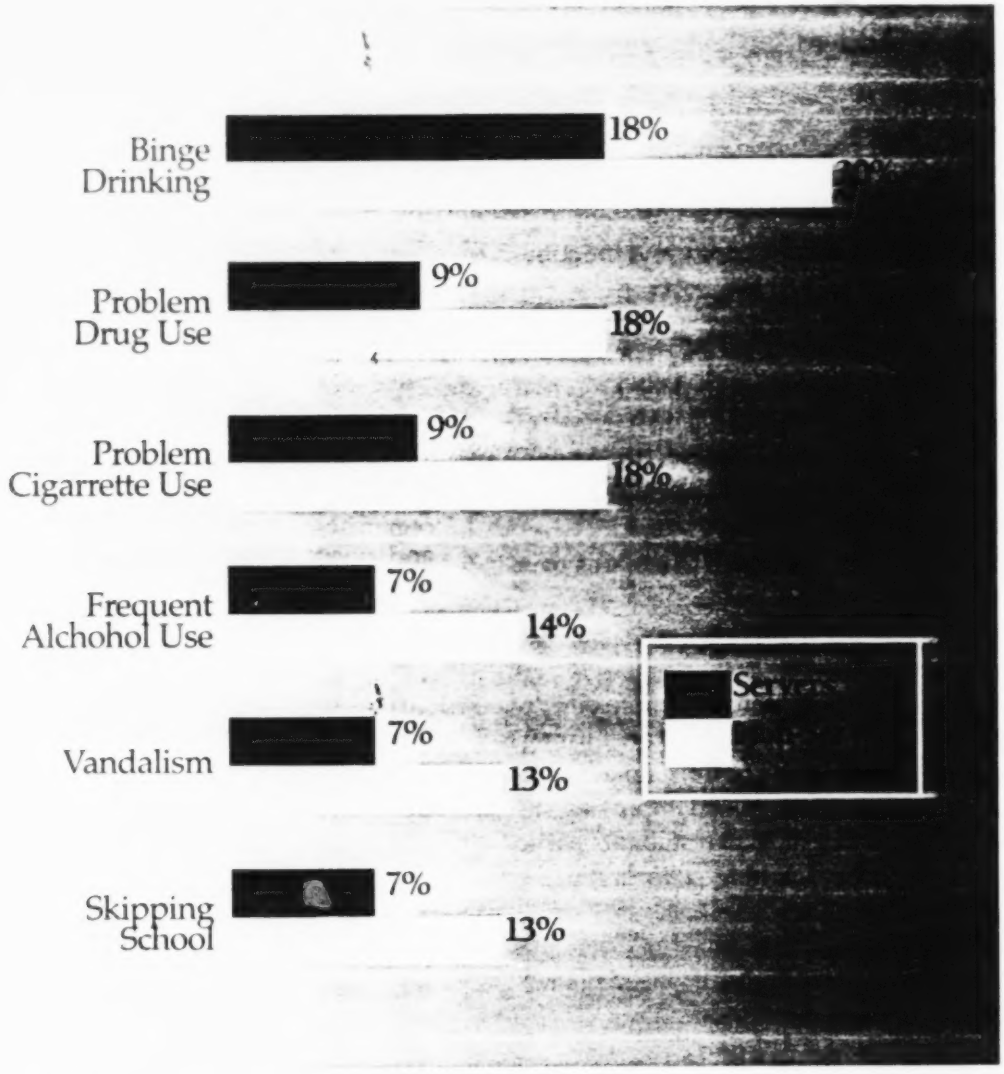
- Young people learn leadership skills as they take responsibility for designing and implementing service experiences.

- Helping others encourages young people to make positive lifestyle choices. Youth who serve are less likely than those who don't to get involved in many at-risk behaviors, including alcohol and tobacco use, vandalism and school truancy.

- Service learning can enhance job skills and provide career development opportunities.

Service Involvement Makes a Difference

The evidence is beginning to mount that service involvement has a positive impact on young people. For example, youth (6th-12th grades) who are involved in service one hour or more a week are about half as likely as those who don't serve to be involved in a variety of negative behaviors, according to national research by the Search Institute. While it is impossible to say that service is solely responsible for cutting at-risk behaviors in half, it is reasonable to infer that the service involvement has a positive influence.



For specific definitions of each at-risk behavior, see Peter L. Benson, *The Troubled Journey* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Search Institute, 1993).

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Communities and Society WIN -

"There is virtually no limit to what young people—with appropriate education, training, and encouragement—can do, no social need they cannot help meet," proclaimed *The Forgotten Half*, a major report from the William T. Grant Foundation.[2] Through service learning, communities, constituents and society gain many things:

- Unmet needs are addressed and problems solved.
- Creative ideas and solutions are offered for perplexing problems.
- New energy and commitment emerge for the community and the common good.
- Communities see youth in a different way—as resources, not problems.
- A young generation of caring, committed and involved citizens is nurtured.
- Youth are prepared to serve as part of their education.

Schools WIN -

As schools search for more effective educational strategies, many are turning to service learning as a powerful method for revitalizing education and improving student achievement. When students participate in service learning, schools gain the following:

- Students are more engaged in their education and their community.
- Students learn more readily because they are learning by doing.
- Teachers become mentors and guides.
- Community members become partners with schools in educating the young.
- Schools are seen as resources to the community, which builds support for the schools.
- School climate—a major factor in school effectiveness—improves.[3]

Youth Service Learning: Changing Paradigms

Moving toward service learning requires that society change its thinking about youth. To be most effective, service learning requires [illegible]

From:	To:
• seeing youth as problems in society	• seeing youth as resources for society
• protecting organizational turf and independence	• working in partnership with others
• viewing youth as "go-fers"	• empowering to be partners
• giving youth low-level volunteer assignments	• building on youth's strengths
• focusing only on service outcomes	• focusing on service and learning outcomes
• doing things *for* children and teenagers	• doing things *with* children and teenagers

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Agency Concerns about Service Learning

While you may understand the benefits of service learning, you may still have important concerns:

Won't bringing youth volunteers into my agency just cause problems?

If you've had little or no experience with integrating young people into your services, you may wonder whether they really can do things well. After all, you've watched the news and know how much trouble young people can cause. Maybe you had a couple of students who helped you once and they messed up an important assignment.

These perceptions of youth are a common reason why many agencies are reluctant to involve youth. Directors of local Volunteer Centers were asked about the major barriers to youth involvement. They listed: "adult control issues," "attitudes about youth," "perceptions and commitment," "prejudice," and "preset notions of youth".[4]

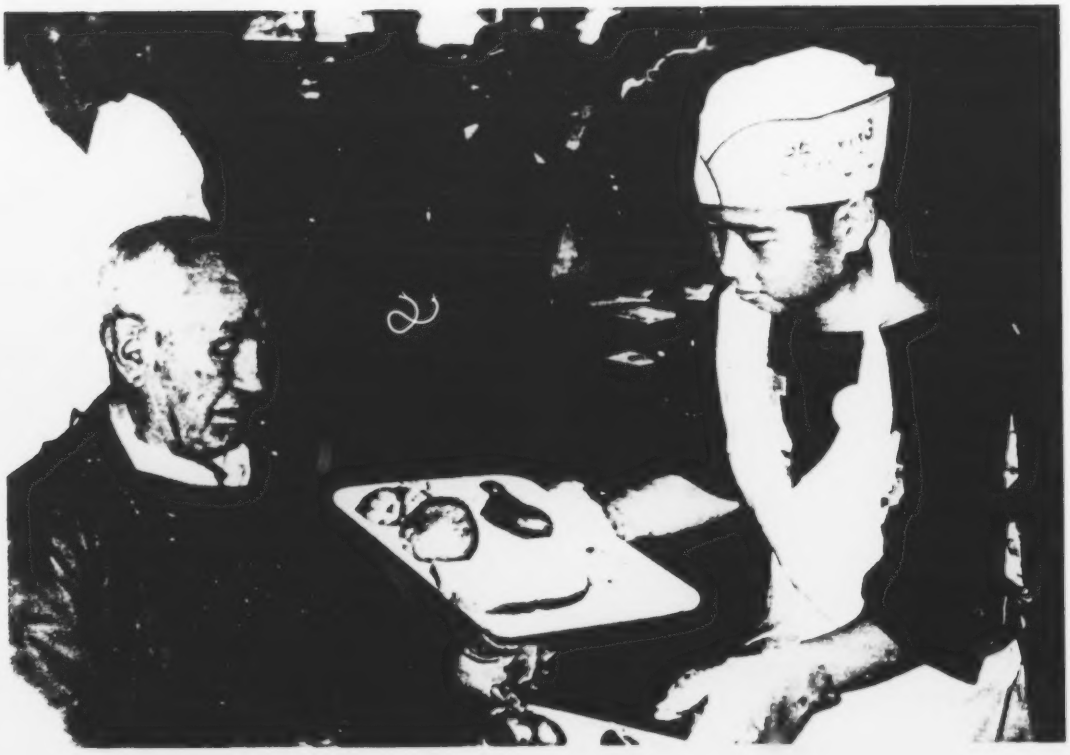
Though agencies sometimes have these concerns before involving young people, those that develop service-learning opportunities find that many of these concerns disappear as they actually begin working with youth. They discover how much youth have to offer and how much young people enhance the organization's mission.

Your organization can begin to realize the potential of service learning by designing a single, well-managed pilot project with a few young people. Such an early success can show the positive substantive contribution young people can make.

James Pitofsky of the National Association of Partners in Education tells about visiting an agency in Washington, D.C., located near a high school. The agency's offices were also a museum that focuses on African culture. While giving the tour, the director mentioned that they never had enough time to give tours while also doing the agency's work in the community. Pitofsky suggested training students to be tour guides—an idea that never had surfaced in the agency. "It's not so much that she had a bad impression of youth," Pitofsky says, "but that she had never thought about what they could do." What's more, the young people learned about their cultural history as they prepared to be guides, and their classroom study strengthened their knowledge making them better tour guides.

Aren't there a lot of logistical problems in working with young people?

Most children and youth can't drive to an assignment, and they have to schedule their service around school, homework, extracurricular activities, family life and other demands on their time. For agencies that have relied on adults with time flexibility and transportation, it can be difficult to see how it could be worth all the trouble it would take to sort out the logistics. In addition, agencies may worry about how to supervise all those students (who often do need more supervision than adults), and about liability in case of accidents or problems. While the issues will probably never disappear, these concerns are best addressed through joint problem-solving



efforts with youth, parents and teachers. Schools may be able to help arrange transportation; and they can pass along ways they've addressed transportation issues in the past. For example, if young people serve as part of their classwork, the service may be performed as part of the school day. Schools may be able to provide transportation as they do for field trips. In addition, the youth volunteers may be covered by their school's insurance.

Joint problem solving can create innovative solutions. The Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, California, worked with an agency that needed students at their site twice a week during the day. The Center recruited adults from the community and trained five or six to work with each classroom of students. Each adult was assigned to three or four students. They took students to their service sites, worked with them and returned them to the schools. After a year, the adults were so committed that they wanted to help more with the educational component of service learning by doing mini reflection activities at the work site and in the car. The adult volunteers are now trained in service learning and work with their student teams as mentors; volunteering with them and encouraging reflection.

Issues of safety and liability can be addressed through a sound risk-management plan.[7] Some concerns can be handled by providing appropriate and effective training for both staff and youth pertaining to their service positions. Clear guidelines and "good faith" steps can be taken to minimize risks to students.

Addressing issues of confidentiality and quality control with youth must be

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addressed in the same way you would address them for anyone who serves through your agency. Just as there are some jobs that are inappropriate for any volunteer without specific training, the same is true for youth. Careful matching, training and supervision are all important to maintain program quality.

We're already overworked. How can we do anything else?

While it does take additional time and resources to coordinate any new pool of volunteers, service learning also brings resources with it. Teachers, other school personnel and parents can often play significant roles in overseeing and supervising the program. In addition, young people may be able to do things for constituencies that were impossible for the organization to do before.

The Doran Resource Center for the Blind discovered how youth can enhance the quality of service when it formed a partnership with Scotts Valley Middle School in Santa Cruz. Students would visit the center weekly to help with a weaving class. One woman had been coming to the class regularly for eight years, but she refused to ever try to weave herself. Each week, one student would spend time with the woman; by the end of the semester, he had convinced her to try.

Creating service-learning opportunities for youth may not be any more work to coordinate than it is to coordinate any group of volunteers. The added benefit is that you are investing in young people who could develop a lifelong commitment to serving in your organization and addressing your mission.

Youth don't really fit in our organization's work.

You may have never considered service learning as an option because your agency doesn't seem to include opportunities for young people. If, for example, you require a one-year commitment from volunteers, you may have difficulty finding a place for a class looking for a semester-long project. Or your typical volunteer assignments may require specialized skills or training that youth don't have.

Perhaps, however, there are some creative ways you can tap youth volunteers. For example, youth may not be able to deliver the meals to homebound citizens, but they could call to see how residents are doing. Or they could develop a computer program to coordinate the drivers' schedules. Or they could use their desktop publishing skills to create publicity brochures and newsletters. The best way to figure out these kinds of opportunities is to work with youth, teachers and your constituency to identify appropriate, mutually beneficial services that youth can provide.

What makes Service Learning Work

There are some key elements to creating service-learning opportunities for young people:

Organizational commitment to service learning

Unless your organization is committed to service learning, it will be difficult to sustain a quality program. Without a genuine commitment, other things take priority.

An organization's commitment to service learning often starts with one person advocating for the approach and bringing other people to share his or her perspective. But it also means that the organization makes an organizational commitment by:

- Seeing youth involvement as a natural and important part of the organization's mission.
- Giving staff time to build partnerships with schools and plan appropriate service opportunities for students.
- Being committed to creating experiences that are stimulating and educational for students.
- Adjusting organization procedures and facilities as needed to accommodate the needs of younger people. For example, are water fountains too high for children who serve?

Strong agency and school partnerships

Agencies can– and do – operate effective youth community service programs on their own. Yet service learning has the most impact when it involves a partnership with a school so that students can take full advantage of the learning that can occur through service.

Most often, agencies will be approached by schools that are introducing a service component into their curriculum. But your organization may want to initiate the partnership, challenging the schools to consider service learning as a option.

A partnership can take many forms. It may simply mean getting to know a service-learning teacher in the school and developing a cooperative relationship. It may involve sharing information and needs between the school and the organization. Or it could ultimately mean a full-scale community collaboration to develop a mutually beneficial service initiative that fully integrates several agencies' services with the school's curriculum. In all cases, the key is clear communication, a focus on mission and goals, mutual support and a shared commitment to service learning.

Quality training, supervision and evaluation

Service learning requires the same volunteer management skills that undergird every quality program. Young people require training to understand the needs and issues they will see and to develop the skills they will need in their assignments. They need careful supervision to maintain quality, support and safety. And they need intentional communication, feedback and evaluation to check perceptions and improve future efforts.

Most agencies that have experience in developing service-learning opportunities for youth say that they are most successful when they build on an existing, well-managed volunteer program. In these

cases, the basic processes and procedures are already in place and can easily be adapted to the particular needs of youth and service learning. Others have found that service-learning opportunities can become the impetus for introducing stronger management procedures throughout the volunteer program."

Youth leadership and empowerment

Like anyone, young people will be more committed and enthusiastic about their work when they have a sense of ownership and responsibility. While agencies often have concerns about placing youth in leadership roles for their projects, most are delighted by the creative energy and ideas youth have for providing quality service.

Effective service-learning efforts see youth as key members of the planning team. "You've got to involve kids in the planning process," insists Bruce Cline, past chairman of the National Council of Volunteer Centers. "We are absolutely kidding ourselves if a bunch of adults sit around and develop a program for kids. . . It just doesn't work."

Adults play important roles in training, supporting, supervising and guiding young people in developing their leadership skills. Giving youth opportunities to assess needs, develop plans, and implement projects all contribute to their growth. Teaching them to make phone calls, organize paperwork and track schedules are all important skills they can use. When youth make mistakes, adults offer guidance and training so youth can learn and grow.

Clear learning and service goals

Seventh-grade science students at the Keys School in California provide a variety of services for a battered women's shelter. Their curriculum is carefully designed to integrate the service with specific learning goals. They study the digestive system so they can prepare nutritious meals for shelter residents. They learn about child development so they can make age-appropriate toys. And they research the effects of stress and abuse on the nervous system.

Students also study a variety of interdisciplinary topics that enhance their experience, including a history of women's rights, the effects of the economy on family stress, funding for the shelter and its cost effectiveness, and how to write children's stories in English and Spanish for children in the shelter.

Not every service experience will have as many learning outcomes as the program at the Keys School. But when attention isn't given to setting clear learning and service goals, young people often get stuck doing dull, meaningless work—work that no one sees as important. Not every service opportunity is exciting or glamorous. Students will need to do

their share of the monotonous work that can be part of any assignment. But by working with students, teachers, customers and other partners to set goals for what students want or need to learn and how this will be accomplished, the young people's service will be more meaningful and productive.

Developmentally appropriate, meaningful service

Just as you would match anyone's skills and strengths with a particular service area, the same is essential in working with youth. Projects or assignments must take into account the young person's physical, intellectual and emotional development so that he or she doesn't get discouraged or bored. Furthermore, matching skills and interests to needs generates unique, powerful outcomes. For example, one thing that is often missing in young people's lives is contact with grandparents. When young people work with older adults, the service becomes mutually rewarding as the generations connect with one another and meet mutual needs.

Connecting Service and Learning

Virtually every community organization can provide service-learning opportunities for youth. Below are some of the ways youth have served their communities—and some things they learned through their service.

Age	Service	Possible Learnings
Grades K-3	Keep a park clean	Citizenship, science, recycling
	Build bird feeders for nursing home	Conservation, aging, drawing shapes
	Visit nursing homes	Relational skills, aging, health care, arts, language arts
Grades 4-5	Survey peers on community needs	Math, social studies, communication
	Research and publish local history	English (writing), social studies, desktop publishing, visual arts
	Plant gardens with low-income families	Social studies, types of plants, biology
Grades 6-8	Tutor younger children	Study skills, the specific subject area
	Help food bank with inventory	Business skills, mathematics
	Build wheel chair ramps	Industrial arts, mathematics
Grades 9-12	Clean a polluted lake or river	Ecology, chemistry, geography
	Register voters	Political science, sociology
	Publish organization newsletter	Journalism, desktop publishing, social studies

Reciprocity with constituents

Just as effective service learning includes young people in the planning, the same is true of the constituents being served. Those constituents need a role in identifying and defining needs, in developing the effort and then in evaluating the effectiveness. This way, you avoid the resentment that can come from people who feel "used" by those who served them in condescending or unhelpful ways.

"It's a question of how you view help and how you view social problems," explains Susan Phillips of the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles. It's irresponsible to just place young people in service situations in which they don't understand the issues or dynamics, because paternalism almost always occurs.

She describes a Youth Leadership for Action program in which one group of students focused on homelessness. The youth began the project by listening to shelter residents. "They treated it as a research project, not a missionary project," Phillips says. The youth then created composite case studies of homeless people that explored all the different reasons people became homeless. Based on these profiles, they designed service projects and gave suggestions of what youth can do and government can do.

Reflection

Since learning and growth are key goals of service learning, structured reflection (sometimes called debriefing or evaluation) is an essential component. In service learning, reflection completes the learning as young people think about what they did, what it means and what they will do because of their experience. It is a clear opportunity to identify and correct misperceptions about service or the role of the organization. And it is the vital link between the service experience and the classroom.

This component not only benefits the young people, but it also strengthens the service they provide. The students become more knowledgeable and sensitive about the issues, more skilled in the activities and aware of the organization's needs and challenges. As a result they become more effective in their service.

The reflection component typically occurs in the classroom. However, agencies can also give young people valuable opportunities to reflect on their experiences on site where staff can serve as resources for young people as they sort through their perceptions, concerns and questions. Not only can agencies help children and teenagers sort through their feelings and worries, but they can guide youth toward the intellectual issues that surface through the service.

Sustained involvement

While one-time service projects can build enthusiasm and interest, they are not adequate for the kind of learning and growth needed. Jon Pratt, executive director of the Minnesota Council on Nonprofits, insists that service projects should be "spread out longer than a TV season" of 13 weeks. "Serious things take a certain amount of time to happen," he notes. It's not enough just to make a personal connection; skills need to develop and relationships need to form. To be most effective in providing long-term involvement, agencies will need to negotiate and plan with the schools and the students. But when arrangements can be made, the impact of the service can be much more profound.

What You Can Do: First Steps

Many agencies already have youth volunteers. Others have specific youth volunteer or service programs. If, however, your organization does not regularly involve youth, here are some steps to get started:

Examine your mission and goals

Begin by asking yourself and others in your organization questions about your mission. What is your organization ultimately trying to accomplish in your community? How could youth enhance your ability to fulfill that mission? What goals do you have for changing public attitudes or opinions? What needs go unmet in your community or in your organization? How might involving youth help to achieve those goals? Answers to these kinds of questions will go a long way toward determining if and how you can involve youth in your organization.

Susan J. Ellis, president of Energize, Inc., and co-author of *Children as Volunteers*, generally asks agencies three questions to get them thinking about how young people might enhance their organization's mission:

- Are any of your constituents young? (e.g a hospice program serves the children and grandchildren of dying residents.) If so, how might a peer-oriented program enhance your services to these constituents?

- If your mission is to improve the quality of life for constituents, how would constituents feel if they were in the presence of young people? In other words, is there a therapeutic benefit? And how could we have children be in

contact with people we serve in a way that would be beneficial?

- Is there something about your work to which young people would bring a different perspective?

Identify an internal service-learning champion

For service learning to take root in an organization, it needs an advocate and leader. The person can be a key decision-maker (a director or board member), a volunteer coordinator, other staff, or a committed volunteer. The key is for someone to emerge who cares enough to keep the issue alive by raising it at staff meetings, circulating articles, proposing ideas, talking about it over lunch or coordinating planning.

Talk to young people

Before getting too far in your thinking, consult with young people. Start with those who now provide service through your organization. Ask for their ideas. Consider bringing them together as a task force to design plans, and give them some decision-making authority within established parameters.

Identify formal or informal partners

Sometimes it is worthwhile to start informally instead of jumping straight into a full-fledged collaboration. Check whether your school district or private schools already have service-learning programs that are looking for agency partners. Have lunch with a teacher you know to talk about how service-learning might fit the needs of your organization. Network with other organizations with experience. See what resources the Volunteer Center, United Way, or other similar organizations in your community can offer. Gradually get to know the individuals who can be effective partners with youth. Then establish relationships that fit the situation.

People with experience in school-agency partnerships find that matching personalities and building a relationship is most important in forming a successful partnership. Kate McPherson of Project Service Leadership in Mt. Vernon, Washington, has worked with a number of partnerships. She finds that it often takes two or three years for a strong partnership to form. But when people take time to build relationships, the partnership is more lasting and has more support.

Talk with the schools

Talk to different people in the school, including teachers and administrators. If you don't know where to start, call the community education specialist, community service coordinator or the principal (who can tell you the best person to talk with). Begin identifying their hopes for a partnership as well as their needs, issues and experiences, if any, in service learning. Share your organization's mission, existing partnerships and needs. Listen to the challenges schools are facing and the demands they are trying to meet.

At some point, it may be appropriate to offer to do in-service training about the mission and needs of community organizations. Begin building relationships and developing a common language and set of concerns that can form a foundation for a partnership.

Build internal understanding and commitment

At the same time you are building relationships with people outside your

organization, involve staff and volunteers in your organization as well. Listen to their ideas and concerns. Talk about the possibilities and dreams. Identify allies. Gradually nurture a sense of ownership and involvement as widely as possible throughout the organization.

Start small

One of the dangers in describing service learning is that people become overwhelmed. It has so many interlocking components and addresses so many issues. When all the steps to an effective, long-term collaboration are described, it's easy to despair and give up, thinking you'll never be able to do all of it.

The advice of people who have already formed service-learning partnerships is to start small—somewhere that stretches your agency, yet is comfortable. Service learning is really a continuum of opportunities—from simple assignments to complex collaborations. If you've never had youth involvement in your programs, you may want to begin by having one or two students take on existing assignments. Acknowledge and celebrate these steps. Then, over time, work to incorporate more and more of the elements of full-scale service learning.

Learn as you go

An underlying principle of service learning is that people learn best by doing. Experience will be your best teacher. As you reflect on different approaches, you'll discover what works and what doesn't. As you encounter new challenges, you'll find resources and people to guide you to deeper understanding. In the process, the truth of this quote from Dag Hammarskjold will become clear: "Never measure the height of a mountain, until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was."

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How Ready Is Your Organization for Service Learning?

There's no simple checklist of what you need to do to get involved in service learning. It all depends on your organization's realities, needs in the community, and available partners. Here are some of the things that are important to have in place – or to create – when developing a program. For each one, mark the level of readiness you perceive. Then look for patterns.

1. How much have you worked with volunteers on other projects? How much have you worked with youth volunteers?
A lot **Some** **None**

2. How much experience does your organization have in forming partnerships with other agencies, schools or businesses?
A lot **Some** **None**

3. Is someone eager to be a champion for service learning within your organization? Is she or he available to work with students?
Eager **Willing** **Reluctant**

4. Do you see youth as a valuable resource for your organization? Do you believe youth will bring fresh ideas and approaches that will help you better address community needs?
Viewed as resources **Neutral** **Viewed as problems**

5. How much access do you have to supervisors for students?
Plenty **Some** **Little**

6. How much experience has your organization had in working with teenagers or children (such as in youth groups, scouts or families)?
A lot **Some** **None**

7. How diverse are the volunteer opportunities available for people of all ages in your organization?
Lots of diversity **Some diversity** **Only 1 or 2 roles**

8. To what extent does your organization use well-defined job descriptions for volunteers?
Always **Sometimes** **Never**

9. How open is your organization to involving youth in decision-making roles once they have shown their commitment to your organization's mission?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

10. How readily could students apply what they would do in your organization to what they are learning in school or to real-life situations?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

11. How strong are your contacts in schools who could facilitate a service-learning partnerships?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

12. How willing is your organization to provide release time for staff to meet with school faculty and attend training in service learning?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

13. How clear is your organization's mission (with clearly defined target groups and strategies for addressing specific needs)?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

14. How appropriate and accessible are your facilities to the age and skill levels of children or youth who will be providing services?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

15. How flexible is your organization to design services to fit students' schedules?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

16. How prepared is your organization to spend the planning time needed to help youth translate their service experiences to their class work, and vice versa?
Very **Somewhat** **Not at all**

Permission to photocopy this worksheet granted for non-commercial use only.

Resources for Service Learning

Publications

Children as Volunteers: Preparing for Community Service (revised edition),
by Susan J. Ellis, Anne Weisbord, and Katherine H. Noyes (Philadelphia, Pa.: Energize, 1991). If you want to include elementary-aged children in service, this booklet is a valuable guide.

Collaborators: Schools and Communities Working Together for Youth Service,
edited by Rich Willits Cairn and Susan Althoen Cairn (St. Paul, Minn.: National Youth Leadership Council, 1991). This booklet presents basic issues in school-community collaborations and gives examples of partnerships.

Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community Service and Public Service, Volumes I-III,
edited by Jane C. Kendall and associates (Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1990). This three-volume collection of articles and case studies is indispensable for anyone serious about understanding the history, theory and practice of service learning. Volume I focuses on theory; Volume II on practice; and Volume III on resources.

Creating and Managing Partnerships for Service-Learning: A Guide for Service-Learning Coordinators,
by Jim Pitofsky (Alexandria, Va.: National Association of Partners in Education, 1994). This self-guiding manual takes you through awareness, needs assessment, goals and objectives, program design, partnership management and other key issues in a service-learning partnership.

Facts and Faith: A Status Report on Youth Service,
by Anne C. Lewis (Washington, D.C.: Youth and America's Future: The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, 1988). This research report is an excellent summary of the impact, practice, and promise of service learning.

Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum,
edited by Rich Willits Cairns and James C. Kielsmeier (St. Paul, Minn.: National Youth Leadership Council, 1991). This collection of the "best of the best" in service learning is a key resource for anyone interested in service learning. It explores the principles and practices, as well as numerous case studies from schools across the country.

A Kid's Guide to Social Action,
by Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Publishing, 1991). Give this book to youth who lead your service projects! It not only gives practical suggestions of ways youth can get involved, but it inspires with dozens of stories of how youth have made a difference in their communities.

Learning Through Service,
by Kate McPherson (Seattle, Wash.: Project Servant Leadership, 1989). A 24-page introduction to the concepts and practical issues in service learning from one of the experts.

The Power and Potential of Youth in Service to Communities,
by Paula J. Beugen (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Office of Volunteer Services, 1993). This manual presents the basic issues in youth community service from an agency perspective, including many examples of service programs in Minnesota.

Schools and Communities: Creating Places of Learning,
by Robert Schumer, Barbara Gomez, James Keismeir and Chuck Supple (Washington,

D.C.: The Points of Light Foundation, 1993). This booklet introduces the concept of service learning and how to create a service-learning environment in communities.

Youth Service: A Guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs, by Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1987). These 72 pages are packed with the wisdom and experience of two of the pioneers in service learning. Suggested worksheets and exercises make it a particularly useful planning guide.

National Organizations

Maryland Student Service Alliance, 200 W. Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21201; 410-767-0358. The Alliance has a series of training manuals dealing with teacher training, plus curricula for elementary, middle and high school as well as special education.

National Association of Partners in Education, 209 Madison St., Suite 401, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703-836-4880. The IDEALS project develops service-learning curricula, cultivates partnerships, and provides training and technical assistance to schools, school districts and community partners.

National Service-Learning Cooperative, National Information Center, University of Minnesota, College of Education, R290 Vocational and Technical Education Building, 1954 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108; 612-625-6276 or 800-808-SERVE. This is a national clearinghouse established by the federal government to provide information on service learning.

National Society for Experiential Education, 3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207, Raleigh, NC 27609; 919-787-3263. The organization serves as a national resource center and professional association of individuals and organizations committed to learning through experience, including service learning.

National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 West County Road B, St. Paul, MN 55113; 612-631-3672. NYLC offers training for youth and adults, consultation and resources related to service learning.

The Points of Light Foundation, Youth and Education Outreach (YEO) 1737 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006; 202-223-9186. The Points of Light Foundation's YEO area offers resources, training, workshops and technical assistance in youth service, service learning and youth leadership.

Project Service Leadership, 12703 Northwest 20th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98685; 206-576-5070. This resource center helps schools and communities implement service-learning partnerships and programs through resources, training and conferences.

Search Institute, 700 S. Third St., Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415; 800-888-7828. Specializing in "practical research benefiting children and youth," this nonprofit organization offers a variety of resources for youth workers in schools and communities. Conducts national and local evaluation and research on the practice and impact of service learning.

NOTES

Barbara A. Lewis, ***A Kid's Guide to Social Action*** (Minneapolis, Minn.: Free Spirit Publishing, 1991) pp. 7-11.

The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families (Washington, DC: Youth and America's Future: The William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, 1988), p.79.

For a thorough discussion of the potential for service-learning in schools, see Rich Cairn and James C. Kielsmeier, editors, ***Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum*** (St. Paul, Minn.: National Youth Leadership Council, 1991).

Unpublished data from the 1993 Volunteer Center Survey by The Points of Light Foundation and the National Council of Volunteer Centers. Analysis by the author.

A good resource for developing a risk-management plan is ***Planning It Safe: How to Control Risk and Liability and Risk in Volunteer Programs*** (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Office on Volunteer services, 1982).

For a classic overview of these issues, see Marlene Wilson, ***The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*** (Boulder Colo.:Volunteer Management Associates,1976).

Portions of this checklist are adapted from an agency readiness checklist developed by Deborah Loesch-Griffin as part of the Communities as Places Of Learning pilot sites in California.

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FOUNDATION

1737 H Street NW
Washington, DC 20000
202.223.9186